

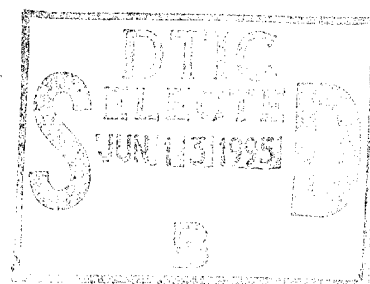
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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE MONOGRAPH

OPERATION RESTORE HOPE THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

BY

COLONEL W. J. A. MELLOR
Australian Army



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OPERATION RESTORE HOPE

THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

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A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE MONOGRAPH

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COLONEL W.J.A. MELLOR

U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

23 MAY 1995

PROJECT ADVISER:

Dr. Douglas Johnson

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1. In the early hours of 17 Feb 93, an Australian Army section, on patrol in the town of Baidoa in central southern Somalia, was fired upon as it approached the town main water point. In the ensuing firefight, three Somalis were wounded, one of whom subsequently died. This small action marked the first time since the end of the Vietnam War that Australian soldiers had engaged in an exchange of hostile fire, and it came, ironically, while engaged on a massive humanitarian mission to save Somali lives.

2. I had the privilege of being the Commander of the Australian contingent on Operation Restore Hope, the UN sanctioned, US led effort to provide security for the provision of humanitarian relief for the population of Somalia. This paper will address some of the issues which arose during the planning and execution of the Australian contribution, which was known as Operation Solace¹. The observations made are, of course, entirely my own, but with the limited availability of Australian documentation in my present circumstances, they are also made largely from memory, and readers should bear that in mind at all times.

BACKGROUND

3. Throughout 1992 I was posted as the Chief of Staff (COFS), Headquarters, 1st Division based at Enoggera, a suburb of

¹Through out the paper the terms Restore Hope and Solace will be used, the former when referring to the wider aspects of the operation in Somalia, and the latter when only Australian issues are involved.

Brisbane. The Headquarters commanded five brigades, two regular, two general reserve, and one ready reserve, and had recently undergone a major restructuring. This had seen most of the divisional assets placed under brigade command, and the assignment of a new role to the Headquarters, that of providing the basis for a deployable joint force headquarters (DJFHQ). As a result, manning had been reduced to approximately seventy.

4. In December 1992, an exercise was held to test the deployment of the DJFHQ. The exercise involved a short notice deployment to RAAF Base Williamtown, and a command post exercise based on a disaster relief scenario in Papua New Guinea. On 9 Dec 92, the Land Commander Australia (LCAUST), MAJGEN Murray Blake, visited the exercise and during the afternoon privately briefed the Divisional Commander, MAJGEN Peter Arnison, and myself on the likelihood of Australia contributing a force to assist in Operation Restore Hope, which had commenced the previous day in Somalia.

5. The Land Commander indicated that there had been a request from the US Government for Australian participation, and that preliminary planning by Headquarters, Australian Defence Force (HQ ADF) proposed several options, the most likely of which was the deployment of a battalion group. He emphasized that the Australian Government had not approved the proposal, but that planning was continuing. If it was accepted by the Government, the force would come from the Operational Deployment Force (3rd Brigade) and be based on the First Battalion, The Royal

Australian Regiment (1RAR). The Land Commander did not mention any arrangements for the higher command of the force.

6. On the evening of 9 Dec 92 the Divisional Commander and I left the exercise and returned to the Headquarters in Brisbane. The following morning, I was advised by MAJGEN Arnison that consideration was being given to the inclusion of a national headquarters in the force for Somalia. If approved, it would be drawn largely from the Divisional Headquarters and I would be appointed to command the operation. Thus began one of the most challenging and rewarding periods of my service career.

Operation Restore Hope

7. Following the overthrow of President Mohammed Siad Barre on 26 Jan 91, Somalia descended into a particularly savage and bitter civil war. By mid 1992 the devastation caused by the fighting led to severe famine conditions in the southern half of the country, and deaths from malnutrition rose dramatically. Relief efforts were hampered by both the fighting among the various militia of the fourteen political factions which were vying for power, and simple lawlessness and banditry. In Mogadishu itself, the capital and main port of Somalia, the fighting was between the forces of the two main players in Somali politics, Mohammed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohammed.

8. The United Nations brokered a cease-fire agreement between Aideed and Ali Mahdi in mid 1992 and UN Security Council Resolution 751 authorized the deployment of a peacekeeping force

and military observers, to supervise it. Known as the United Nations Operation in Somalia, UNOSOM, it was mandated under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which meant reliance on the agreement and goodwill of the parties to the dispute for the effective operation of the peacekeepers. Essentially self defensive ROE were authorized and the use of force to achieve the mission was not permitted. Australia agreed to contribute a movement control unit to the force. It was hoped that the cease-fire would allow international relief agencies to effectively deliver humanitarian assistance.

9. Unfortunately the deployment of the UN force was slow, and, with less than one battalion and some of the headquarters (including eleven Australians) and observers in place, the agreement between the parties broke down and hostilities recommenced. Relief aid dwindled to a trickle. As the death toll rose into the hundreds of thousands, international pressure, fuelled by graphic television pictures of the plight of the Somali people, rose.

10. In early December 1992, the Security Council passed Resolution 794 which authorized a US-led operation in Somalia, the mission of which was to provide security for the provision of humanitarian relief. The intervention, Operation Restore Hope, was under the principles of peace enforcement provided for by Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In these cases, consent and agreement by the warring parties are not necessary nor sought, and force may be authorized to achieve the mission.

11. Most of the nations which had indicated their willingness to contribute to UNOSOM but had been unable to do so when the cease-fire broke down provided forces to Operation Restore Hope.

PLANNING

12. By the time I was advised that I may be commanding the Australian contingent there had already been considerable planning conducted at HQ ADF and LHQ. It had been very tightly held and, until the Land Commander's briefing on 9 Dec 92, no-one at Division or lower was aware of the proposed Australian commitment. It was considered that the need for confidentiality outweighed any planning advantage to be gained from wider knowledge. At the time I considered this approach to be flawed, but in fact it had little effect on the planning, and the lack of public awareness in the early stages certainly allowed for focus on the important issues.

13. It was apparent that the force structure and mission had already been determined by HQ ADF and LHQ. The important planning matters at this stage were the preparation of the force for deployment, the deployment itself, logistic planning, and the size and role of the national headquarters.

14. The nascent state of the national headquarters, to be known as Headquarters Australian Forces Somalia (HQ AFS), and its distance from the battalion group in Townsville, lead to my playing little part in either the preparation of the force for deployment or the deployment planning itself. These aspects of

the operation were handled by LHQ and HQ 3 BDE, the immediate superior headquarters of the battalion group. My focus at this stage was to raise HQ AFS, and become fully briefed on the planning so far. While this arrangement had little effect on either the preparation or deployment, the lack of early contact between HQ AFS and the battalion group tended to cause some early misunderstandings between the two staffs.

Force Structure

15. The force for Operation Solace was to be based on the on-line battalion (1RAR) of the Operational Deployment Force, augmented by elements from an APC squadron, a field engineer troop, and a signals troop. The headquarters and forward observer parties from the battalion's direct support artillery battery were also included to assist with liaison and civil affairs. The inclusion of this element was subsequently instrumental in the success of the mission. A slice of combat service support from the Brigade Administrative Support Battalion (BASB) rounded out the force. The combat service support included a larger than usual medical element, and additional transport, supply, and repair.

16. At this stage I had absolutely no input to the determination of the force structure, but when briefed to me it appeared to be functional and balanced, and capable of undertaking a wide range of likely tasks. I was advised that the ceiling for the force was to be 900 personnel which was to

include my headquarters, set initially at ten.

National Headquarters

17. While the structure and size of the battalion group appeared to be adequate, at least on paper, it was almost immediately obvious that the limitation of ten personnel for the national headquarters was unrealistic. The role of the headquarters would be determined by the responsibilities given to the commander. Very early on it was clear that no tactical role was envisioned for HQ AFS. As Commander Australian Forces Somalia (CAFS) I would retain national command, but it was thought that the battalion group should be allocated under the operational control of a US formation headquarters once in country. I could find no definition of just what "national command" entailed. Obviously issues such as discipline, legal, and finance would be matters for the national headquarters, and the lack of a firm definition would allow for considerable flexibility on other issues once on the ground in Somalia.

18. While the logistic concept had yet to be fully determined, it was clear that the higher headquarters anticipated that there would be a degree of reliance on a Combined Support Agreement with the US, and the details of that support would be managed by HQ AFS. The physical security situation was uncertain at this stage and that indicated a need for protection, and, as this was to be the largest deployment of Australian troops overseas since the Vietnam War, media interest would be a big factor, necessitating public relations staff. It was obvious that the

size of the headquarters would grow.

19. In the early planning there seemed to be three options for the functioning of HQ AFS. One school of thought suggested that the headquarters integrate fully into the main US headquarters (known by many titles early on, but finally as HQ Unified Task Force, or UNITAF). In this mode, Australian officers would fill normal staff positions on the headquarters and fulfil their national functions as "dual hatted". The advantages of this modus operandi are that it cuts down the requirement for staff support and provides for much closer liaison between the national groups. On the other hand, national identity at that level is, to a large extent, lost and the potential for conflicts of interest between national and operational duties are enhanced. It does, of course, require the commitment and consent of the lead nation to form a combined headquarters.

20. Another suggested method was to establish HQ AFS as a separate HQ but co-located with UNITAF. This allowed for better national identity, while retaining as close liaison as possible. Of course, the manpower bill for staff support would be higher. The final option was a variation on a theme, still with the establishment of a separate headquarters, but co-located with the battalion group. This would maximize good relations with the battalion group, and perhaps allow for some manpower savings, but given the absence of a tactical role for HQ AFS, it appeared that the majority of the headquarters work would be accomplished in the HQ UNITAF environment. I did not seriously consider this

option as viable.

APPROVAL

21. On 15 Dec 92, the Prime Minister formally announced that the Government had agreed to contribute a battalion group sized force to Operation Restore Hope. The force was to deploy by both sea and air using Royal Australian Navy ships and chartered QANTAS aircraft, commencing in late December, with the force expected to be complete in Somalia by mid January 1993. A period of seventeen weeks was set as the duration of the commitment.

22. On 16 Dec 92 I flew to Townsville for a news conference. My trip also gave me an opportunity to meet Lieutenant Colonel David Hurley, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, with whom I would be very closely associated for the next few months. I had not previously met Hurley, apart from exchanging pleasantries in a carpark at a recent parade we had both attended, although I was aware of his good reputation as a CO. I was keen to get to know him to further our chances of working well together, but in reality, a joint press conference followed by a lunch attended by some of the officers who would be deploying to Somalia, did not afford much opportunity for that.

23. The press conference revealed how little both the press and ourselves knew of what was currently happening in Somalia, or was planned for the Australian contingent when we arrived. It was clear that the operation needed people on the ground as soon as possible, and on return to Brisbane I was advised that I was to

take a reconnaissance party to Mogadishu in the very near future. The reconnaissance party was to be known as the National Liaison Team (NLT).

NATIONAL LIAISON TEAM

24. The critical issues for the NLT to determine were the area of operations for the battalion group, the concept of operations, and the nature and extent of logistic support available in country from US sources. There were several other matters to be examined which included the arrival, transit, and on-deployment of the force, issues of command and control, the extent and availability of medical support, and so on. The NLT was made up of some of the officers who were to form HQ AFS and comprised myself as Commander, a LTCOL logistics staff officer, a MAJ operations/intelligence staff officer, a MAJ medical administration staff officer, a CAPT public relations officer, and a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) LIEUT (O-3) who was to examine and report on the port facilities in Mogadishu.

25. **Briefings.** The Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), GEN Peter Gration was keen that the NLT deploy to Mogadishu as soon as possible, and on 18 Dec 92 I went to Canberra for final briefings. The Defence Intelligence Office provided a comprehensive intelligence update, although their response to many of my questions was "we're hoping you will be able to tell us that once you get there". It was clear that while a good deal of background information on Somalia was available, little current intelligence from the force on the ground was reaching

Australia. The briefing provided a good feel for the convoluted nature of Somali society and politics, but little information on what hostile elements we would be confronting.

26. I was then briefed by HQ ADF staff and gained a much clearer picture of the planning leading up to the decision to commit. HQ ADF were constantly in touch with the Australian Defence Staff in the Embassy in Washington, as well as US Department of Defence authorities in both the Pentagon and at Central Command, the Unified Command Headquarters responsible for Operation Restore Hope. I was briefed extensively on the Rules of Engagement (ROE), and left in no doubt that AFS would be operating under Australian ROE. I was shown a copy of the US ROE and advised that HQ ADF legal staff were reviewing them with a view to issuing the Australian version. It was anticipated that there would only be minor changes, if any, from the US ROE, although the issue of the use of riot control agents, in particular CS gas required further study. I was assured that ROE would be issued prior to the force being deployed.

27. Finally, I paid a call on the CDF and the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), LTGEN John Gray. In the briefing with the CDF we discussed issues of logistic support, ROE and particularly command and control, where he indicated that he favored the full integration of HQ AFS into HQ UNITAF.

28. The role of the CGS in the ADF command and control system is similar to that of the Chief of Staff of the US Army, that is he raises, trains and equips forces, but has no operational

responsibilities once they are deployed. Consequently, my discussions with the CGS centered around the support structure in Australia, and the prospect of a follow-on force on completion of our tour. The CGS was very keen to continue the commitment even if the UN had again taken over responsibility, and suggested that even a company group would be a worthwhile contribution. He assured me of his personal confidence in my ability to handle the task, and closed by telling me that I should not hesitate to call on him should I feel the need.

29. I found both interviews with the CDF and CGS to be enormous confidence builders.

30. On my way back to Brisbane, I stopped for an hour or so at Sydney airport, where the LCAUST briefed me. Command of Operation Solace had been delegated by the CDF to LCAUST, and he had decided to command it directly from LHQ rather than through the Divisional Headquarters. Hence MAJGEN Blake was to be my immediate superior. We had only approximately one hour together, and he briefed me on a number of issues. Most importantly he made it perfectly clear that all my communications were to be through his Headquarters, and that I should take instructions only from him. At the same time, he emphasized that I was the man on the ground and that he would back my judgement on issues as I saw them, particularly with regard the role and function of HQ AFS. He provided me with a provisional directive which outlined command and control arrangements, my mission, and my responsibilities. All were sufficiently broad to allow maximum

flexibility and interpretation once I was on the ground in Somalia. Indeed, the provisional status of the directive was deliberate, and the MAJGEN Blake invited me to suggest amendments should I see the need. I came away from my briefing with the Land Commander confident that I knew the bounds of my responsibilities and authority.

31. NLT Deployment. On 21 Dec 92, the National Liaison Team departed RAAF Base Amberley in a Falcon 900 from the VIP Fleet of 34 Squadron. We were joined on the flight by a RAN Supply Officer who was to report on the naval logistic situation in anticipation of one of the RAN deployment ships remaining on station in support of the contingent. He returned to Australia when the Falcon 900 staged back through Mogadishu after two days. The flight transited through Port Hedland and Cocos Island prior to overnighting at Diego Garcia, and then on to Mogadishu the next day via a refuel in the Seychelles.

32. On arrival in Mogadishu the aircraft was met by MAJ Greg Jackson, the senior Australian movement control officer attached to UNOSOM HQ. MAJ Jackson and ten other Australians had been in Somalia since October to assist with the deployment of the UN Force, but in fact only part of a Pakistani battalion had actually arrived before the ceasefire breakdown. He and his team provided excellent early support to the NLT, and were a source of background information to fill in some of the gaps left by the DIO briefing.

33. At this stage there were several of the coalition forces

already in country, the French, Canadians, Belgians, Italians, Moroccans, Turks, and others, with new forces arriving daily. The US had established a coalition support office to facilitate the arrival of contingents to which I was taken soon after arrival. In short order I was briefed on the ROE, provided with a USMC Liaison Officer (CPT(P) Mike Owen) and a vehicle and driver, and transported to the US Headquarters which had occupied the ruins of the former US Embassy compound in the southern sector of the city.

34. Once at the HQ, I was taken to meet BG Zini, the J-3. I briefed him on our proposed force structure and deployment timetable, and he brought me up to date with current operations and proposals for the expansion of control of the southern Somali countryside. He briefly mentioned that his initial thoughts were that the Australian battalion should take over the Baidoa area, and I indicated to him that I needed to assess the implications of that before committing to it. He accepted my position.

35. I then called on the Force Commander LTGEN Robert Johnston. He formally welcomed me and we discussed much the same issues as I had with BG Zini. He again outlined their plan for the Australian contingent to take over Baidoa, but again I requested time to examine the options.

36. On the flight over we had undertaken an appreciation to determine which region would be the best deployment area. High in our minds were the logistic difficulties associated with an inland region, given limited second line transportation assets.

On paper, and with little information on the detailed political and hostile element situation, it appeared that Kismayo was the most attractive option from a logistic support perspective. It had a port and an airfield, and was connected to Mogadishu by an all-weather road.

37. By the time we arrived in Mogadishu both the Belgians and the US Army had forces in Kismayo, and it was not an option for us. In retrospect this proved to be most fortuitous.

38. Despite the inland location, Baidoa was not without its attractions. The best main road in southern Somalia connected it with Mogadishu via Baledogle, which the US forces were developing as a major logistic and aviation base. As a former Somali Air Force station, Baidoa airport had a 10,000' sealed runway which, despite some deterioration, was capable of accommodating C130 aircraft. The city was a regional centre, surrounded by numerous smaller villages and, because of the particularly savage effects of the famine, was the base for many of the Non Government Organizations (NGO) relief operations. The Bay Region which surrounded Baidoa was predominately populated by one clan only, and despite it having suffered some of the most bitter fighting of the civil war, no militia was permanently based in the area in late 1992. Baidoa had been occupied by a Marine force of Brigade(-) strength since mid December, who had encountered only sporadic opposition to their presence, mainly from bandits.

39. After negotiating with UNITAF on the availability of some aviation and additional logistic support, and analyzing the

likely tasks vis-a-vis the battalion group structure, I determined that Baidoa would be a suitable location for the Australian force. Having briefed and gained the concurrence of LCAUST, I advised LTGEN Johnston accordingly.

DEPLOYMENT

40. The deployment, in-country reception and re-deployment of the force to Baidoa was achieved according to schedule and without any significant difficulties. Given that this was the first major deployment of a land force to outside Australia in over twenty years, the relative ease with which it was achieved, and the degree of co-operation between the US agencies and HQ AFS spoke volumes about the validity of both Australian doctrine and training, and the standardization of planning and procedures between the two defence forces. Indeed, a number of logistic staff officers from both HQ AFS and UNITAF had only recently together attended an ABCA logistic exercise in the UK, and Operation Restore Hope afforded an opportunity to put into practice the lessons learned, not to mention renew acquaintances.

41. On 22 Jan 93, the last elements of the battalion group arrived in Baidoa, and Australian Force Somalia was complete and operational.

OPERATIONS

Command and Control

42. The southern part of Somalia which formed the Area of

Operations for Restore Hope was further divided into several smaller sectors designated Humanitarian Relief Sectors (HRS). These sectors basically followed former regional boundaries, and forces were allocated by HQ UNITAF to operate in each HRS. In mid January 1993 when the battalion group was deploying into Baidoa, HRS were controlled by the Marine Force Component (MARFOR), the Army Force Component (ARFOR), the Canadians, the French, the Belgians, and the Italians. There were numerous other national components present in Somalia, but they were either too small or inadequately structured for HRS operations, or had national limitations on the nature of their employment. This, of course, limited their operational usefulness and provided a further source of frustration for HQ UNITAF. Nonetheless the political imperative for their presence on the operation was well understood and acknowledged.

43. Command of Operation Restore Hope was vested in LTGEN Johnston, and he exercised that command through HQ UNITAF. The Headquarters was in reality Headquarters, I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) which had been supplemented with some additional US Army and Air Force personnel for the Operation. It was therefore an extant, fully functioning staff with clearly established, standardized and practiced procedures. The Headquarters had been involved in some planning for the Operation prior to deploying to Somalia.

44. Rather than have their personnel integrated into the headquarters, foreign contingents were encouraged to provide

liaison officers and teams or to establish national headquarters in the vicinity. AFS established a headquarters adjacent to HQ UNITAF in the old library and USIS compound of the former US Embassy.

45. As mentioned previously, it was anticipated that operational control of the battalion group would be delegated to a US formation headquarters, and my Directive from LCAUST authorized me to effect that. The US Army 10th Mountain Division had two brigades and some logistic support elements in country, with the Divisional Headquarters set up in Mogadishu. It was recommended by HQ UNITAF that the battalion group be placed under the operational control of HQ 10 MTN DIV, and I concurred. A Directive authorizing the change of status was issued by HQ AFS.

46. Directive Control. The Land Commander's Directive to me as national commander gave me four broad responsibilities. I was to represent him in my dealings with the CG UNITAF and subordinate commanders in matters affecting the operational employment and safety of Australian Forces Somalia. I was responsible for the safety and well-being of the force, its prudent employment, and the co-ordination of other Australian support which was from time to time to enter Somalia in support of AFS.

47. Throughout the operation I used directives in preference to orders for the guidance of the battalion group CO. I did this for a number of reasons. Firstly, the nature of the mission of Operation Solace allowed for considerable interpretation and flexibility in its execution and I believed that such flexibility

could be best encouraged in a subordinate commander by providing guidance and limits, rather than prescribing actions. Secondly, the circumstance of command and control in country described above called for the battalion group commander to be responsive to two headquarters, and I was keen that the role of each be not confused. Clearly HQ 10 MTN DIV controlled the day-to-day operations of the battalion group, and would do so by the use of operations and frag orders, whereas my interests were in the establishment of policy guidelines for the force to follow. Finally my limited staff militated against the production of elaborate operations orders.

48. I believe the use of directives simplified the command and control arrangements both for myself and for the battalion group commander while allowing me adequate flexibility in the exercise of my national command responsibilities.

Tasks

49. The mission for the battalion group commander was to provide security for the provision of humanitarian relief within the Baidoa HRS. The breadth of the mission allowed considerable flexibility and initiative in its execution which LTCOL Hurley fully exploited. He assessed that there were three key tasks which needed to be undertaken in order to fulfil the mission.

They were:

- a. secure the airfield and key installations,
- b. secure food storage and distribution points, and

c. provide security for food and other relief convoys.

In addition, the battalion group was required to provide limited logistic support to other coalition partners. While not directly flowing from the mission, this last task came about as a result of the nodal position of Baidoa in the Restore Hope AO, and was mainly limited to the provision of transit facilities and the storage and dispensing of bulk fuel and water.

50. The battalion group main base was established at the former Somali Air Force Base approximately a kilometer to the south west of the township. A partially completed hanger provided some good hardstanding, and some use was made of a number of disused, and mostly derelict buildings, mainly for headquarters and administrative purposes. Soldier accommodation was predominantly under canvas. The runway formed one side of the perimeter, and strong points were manned around the clock to prevent unauthorized incursions. Extensive use was made of night surveillance devices which allowed for reduced manning of the strong points at night. Eventually the entire perimeter was fenced with barbed wire.

51. The battalion group sought to dominate the HRS through static security positions, mobile patrolling, convoy escorting, and on-call ready reaction forces. The vast majority of these operations were conducted at platoon level and below, and placed great reliance on the capabilities of the junior officers and NCOs. They were not found wanting.

52. Static Security Positions. Apart from the main base at the

airfield, the battalion group would periodically establish roadblocks on the major thoroughfares in the HRS. The purpose of these were to monitor the flow and nature of traffic, but also to detect any large scale movement of weapons. While disarmament was not a stated mission for Operation Solace, the ROE did permit the confiscation or cantonment of weapons, and the battalion group policy was to confiscate all weapons publicly displayed or, when detected, covertly transported. The roadblocks also served to maintain a high visibility in the community.

53. Patrolling. A presence was constantly maintained in the town of Baidoa, initially by way of foot and mounted patrols. These patrols originated from the battalion main base at the airfield, but after a number of attacks against NGO personnel in other HRS, it was decided to base a company permanently in the township, spread among the numerous NGO compounds. The patrols were conducted around the clock to all areas, and were designed both to foster the confidence of the local population in the foreign military presence, and deter lawlessness on the part of the large bandit element present in the town and on the outskirts.

54. Patrolling was also conducted in the outer lying areas, and the main villages and townships. So much of peace operations is presence, and the battalion group's patrolling program ensured that every population centre within the HRS was visited irregularly, but often.

55. It was important to impress on the soldiers that Operation

Solace was a humanitarian mission, as there was a tendency early on, particularly at the very junior levels, to view it as low intensity conflict. As this was the first deployment of a land combat force from Australia in over twenty years, and the ROE reflected Chapter VII rather than Chapter VI concepts, this was an understandable reaction. Nonetheless it was inimical to the successful completion of the mission and needed to be countered. This was achieved by a number of means. In briefing and orders formats, references to "enemy" were deleted, with the bandits and militia being referred to as "hostile elements". The battalion group soldiers became involved in some community assistance programs, and when on patrol the soldiers were briefed to maintain an alert, but not aggressive manner. These efforts soon bore fruit, and the battalion group earned the respect of the local population.

56. Convoy Escorts. Perhaps the most important task for the battalion group was to escort relief convoys into the outlying areas. Until the arrival of the UNITAF forces, the convoys had been at the mercy of both the various political militia and roving groups of bandits, which had forced the NGOs to employ armed Somali guards, often of dubious integrity. The lack of relief aid in the countryside had caused large scale migration to the townships such as Baidoa, and this was placing enormous strain on what were very limited resources. The end result was great frustration for both the NGOs and the people.

57. Thus investment in convoy escorting was seen to offer

significant returns in respect to not only the relief of the recipients, but also in building confidence in the population in both the soldiers' and the NGOs' ability to get aid to the outlying areas. This would induce those who had left the countryside for the townships to return, and foster the redevelopment of agriculture.

58. The actual mechanics of the convoy escorts were no different from any normal military operation, albeit the roads were, in the main, worse than any previously experienced. Their organization, however, required considerable negotiations and arrangement with the various NGOs, more of which will be covered in the section on Civil-Military Relations.

59. On Call Ready Reaction Forces. The company providing security for the main base at the airfield also were tasked with maintaining a platoon, mounted in APC to react to any call for assistance throughout the HRS.

Intelligence Operations

60. Fundamental to the successful prosecution of each of these tasks was the need for good intelligence, at all levels. One of the members of the NLT was the HQ AFS Intelligence Officer (G-2), and on arrival he sought to gain a comprehensive picture of the political and military situation in Somalia in general, and the Bay Region in particular. Despite the submission of clearances into the US system prior to departure from Australia, full access for myself and the G-2 was delayed for some period after our

arrival while they passed through the bureaucracy. Nonetheless, once cleared, the level of access and degree of co-operation between the UNITAF and AFS intelligence staffs were outstanding.

61. Human Intelligence. It became quite clear very early on that the most significant and pertinent intelligence was being obtained by human means, usually through the employment of CI Teams. The original battalion group force structure, however, made scant allowance for such, and prior to deployment, as a result of the recommendation of the NLT, additional CI assets were included. Even these proved to be insufficient, and further personnel were deployed in late January and early February. In the end, while the number of CI Teams were adequate for the task, they were increasingly over worked and stretched thinly to cover all requirements. In retrospect, even more CI Teams were needed to fully satisfy the demand for their services.

62. Signals Intelligence. HQ AFS included a small section to liaise with the deployed US Sigint staff and assets. Again, access and co-operation between them were extraordinarily good, although it became clear that, while sigint was useful, better results were obtained from humint. After six weeks or so, some members of the section returned to Australia as compensators for additional CI personnel, while others were redeployed to CI duties.

63. Interpreters. The intelligence process generated a great need for Somali interpreters. These fell into two categories, those who could obtain a US security clearance, and thus be

employed on more sensitive duties such as sigint, and those without clearances who were employed to accompany CI Teams. The former were predominantly Somali immigrants living in the US and US citizens of Somali extraction who were returned to Somalia under civil contract, and the latter were local inhabitants, particularly school teachers, recruited for the task. Ironically, our experience showed that it was generally those from the second category who were the more reliable.

Change in Command Status

64. In February, as US combat presence began to reduce, it became apparent that HQ 10 MTN DIV would also reduce and ultimately withdraw. By this time the tempo of operations had been effectively established with the battalion group on the ground in the HRS taking all the tactical decisions, and the Div HQ providing what staff and specialist support was needed, as well as providing the essential buffer between the battalion group and the corps level UNITAF headquarters. I determined that, with minor supplementation, HQ AFS could adequately fulfil that role and sought approval from LCAUST to resume the operational control of the battalion group. This was forthcoming, and on 2 Mar 93 HQ AFS resumed the full command of the complete force. From the battalion HQ perspective this change much simplified the command and control arrangements, but altered little in the way of day to day operations.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

65. It was obvious, even before deployment, that good civil-military relations would be instrumental in the success of the mission, and it was clear soon after arrival that such relations would exist on two levels. The first level was with the local Somali authorities, where they existed, and the second with the fourteen different NGO groups based in Baidoa. Further, the location of HQ AFS in Mogadishu meant that the responsibility for fostering such relationships, normally one for the national headquarters, would devolve to the battalion group CO.

66. This had been anticipated, and the force structure included the headquarters and forward observer parties of the battalion's direct support artillery battery even though no guns were deployed with the force. This headquarters, commanded by a Major, offered an independent structure, good communications, and some transportation assets which made it ideally suited to manage civil-military relations on the CO's behalf.

67. Following the HQ UNITAF lead, the battery headquarters was designated the Civil-Military Operations Team (CMOT) and it provided liaison to the Civil-Military Operations Centre (CMOC) established in Mogadishu to co-ordinate with the NGO regional head offices established there. CMOT quickly became the focal point in the battalion group for all dealings with any of the civilian groups.

68. Community Leaders. In the first instance the CO of the battalion group held meetings with those Somalis who were

identified as either town elders or community leaders. The identification process was assisted by consultation with the NGOs. At these meetings LTCOL Hurley explained what the battalion was there to do and in broad terms how they would do it, and sought their co-operation. Policy regarding the confiscation of weapons was explained, and accepted. The purpose of these meetings was to gain the confidence of the community leaders in the battalion group's approach to their mission. It was premature in the early stages to expect wholesale co-operation and support, that would come with time, but it was important to include the local leadership in briefings to demonstrate that we were providing security for them, not imposing martial law on them.

69. NGOs. At the same time meetings were held with all the NGO personnel based in Baidoa. Again it was important to gain a mutual understanding of each other's operations and perspectives, and establish common ground. LTCOL Hurley wisely did not seek immediately to impose military solutions on the NGOs, there was in fact no authority to do so. Most of the NGOs had been in Somalia for upwards of a year, and had come through the horrors of October to December 1992. It would have been counterproductive to dictate methods of operations to them at such an early stage. They were, of course, all well aware of the risks, and keen to co-operate in any case.

70. What was lacking among the NGOs was a central management forum to better plan and co-ordinate their activities. While

this was evident to the battalion group almost immediately, a solution to the problem was approached cautiously and tactfully. It was felt that it was better to suffer some early frustrations and inefficiencies to gain the confidence of the NGOs, than to attempt to reorganize them and risk alienation. While this was not a popular approach among the junior levels in the battalion group who invariably were the ones to suffer the most frustration and additional workload, in the long term it proved to be absolutely correct. After less than a month, the NGOs realized that we were not interested in doing their job for them, and they became very amenable to the introduction of better management and efficiencies in their operations. Throughout this period, CMOT performed the valuable function of building the confidence of the NGOs in the battalion group, and vice versa.

Additional Tasks

71. Once the operation settled into a semblance of routine and the immediate threat of continued deaths from starvation subsided, opportunities arose for additional civil affairs tasks to undertaken. These included the provision of additional water wells in the town, re-roofing public buildings such as schools and orphanages, and assisting with medical staff in the local hospitals. While these tasks were all outside a strict interpretation of the mission, they were undertaken with spare capacity and at no stage were they allowed to interfere with the primary mission.

72. Local Police Force. One of the initiatives of HQ UNITAF was the resurrection of the Somali Police Force. The anarchy that had followed the civil war had seen the force cease to exist for all intents and purposes, and it was thought that bringing it back into operation would add a sense of normality to the communities. The initiative was managed at HQ UNITAF by the Staff Judge Advocate in conjunction with the Provost Marshal, with the Legal Officer, HQ AFS, also involved in the planning and policy formulation.

73. From a US perspective *posse comitatus* proved to be a major obstacle in the implementation of this program, but for AFS no such restriction existed. As a result, the Legal Officer, assisted by a detachment of Military Police from HQ AFS, was able to put considerable energy into recruiting former policemen, retraining and equipping them, and, in conjunction with the battalion group, re-introducing them back into the community as functioning police. This served the purpose of not only providing confidence to the local population, but also to the soldiers of the battalion group who could see that their role as security providers would eventually be supplanted by local, civil means.

74. It would be overly simplistic to say that the re-introduction of the police was an unqualified success, but despite the set backs of some organizational and personnel problems, and a great deal of difficulty in getting the United Nations to fund the project, the re-appearance of the police on

the streets of Baidoa and other surrounding villages contributed significantly to Operation Solace.

75. Legal System. Having established the basis of a police force it became imperative to have a functioning legal system to deal with those apprehended and charged with offenses. The Somali judiciary was another casualty of the anarchy, although at the time of Operation Solace there were still lawyers and judges living in the various communities. Again the program was the initiative of the SJA, HQ UNITAF, but in this instance the energy and determination of the Legal Officer, HQ AFS, ensured that the proposal became reality in the Baidoa HRS. The Court House was rebuilt, copies of the 1962 Somali Penal Code located, and judges and lawyer encouraged to participate.

76. In a society as fractured and devastated as Somalia in 1992-93, where bandits and criminals held power through force, the efforts required to re-establish a functioning judiciary cannot be overestimated. Confidence had to be built slowly and deliberately, with patience and understanding. Western values and logic do not necessarily hold sway, with frustration often accompanying effort. Nonetheless, the judicial system did re-emerge and began functioning in Baidoa in April 1993. It dealt with petty crimes of property initially, while the police, guided by AFS staff, gathered evidence on more serious crime.

77. A significant test of the system occurred in late April when a local bandit, Gutale, was brought before the court charged with some thirty murders. On completion of the trial he was

found guilty and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. The prosecution appealed on the basis of sentence, the mandatory sentence for murder being death, and the defence appealed the verdict. An appeals court was then assembled, the verdict confirmed and the sentence overturned, with the death penalty being imposed. In stunningly abrupt fashion, the prisoner was immediately escorted from the court room to the prison where he was executed by the police. Somali justice is swift.

78. Nonetheless, the system operated according to Somali law, and while its haste was somewhat of a shock to Western concepts, Gutale's execution served to enhance the stature and confidence of both the judiciary and the population in the legal system.

79. Political Activity. Clearly the situation in Somalia was merely a symptom of the deeper problem of the lack of legitimate, peaceful political processes. Addressing issues such as the police and judicial systems would help, but they did not go to the root cause. While this was recognized in HQ UNITAF, the struggle for political power at the national level was complex and, to a large extent, intractable. Conferences were held under UN auspices in Addis Ababa beginning in early January 1993 to seek some form of political settlement, and while agreements were signed, they were rarely implemented.

80. HQ UNITAF, quite rightly, saw this process as fundamental to the successful solution of the Somali situation, but outside the mission for Operation Restore Hope. While prepared to provide assistance and support, UNITAF deferred to the UN to take the

lead on the political agenda. The UN, however, focused almost exclusively at the national level, with little attention paid to the development of grass roots political processes.

81. I saw this to be a serious flaw in the UN approach and sought, unsuccessfully, to influence UN authorities to put more effort at the local level. It seemed to me that the UN were attempting to rebuild the political system from the top down rather than addressing all levels simultaneously. Of course, resources were a problem, and that influenced the UN's position, but nevertheless, the disjointed approach, I believe, contributed to the subsequent UN failures in Somalia.

82. In Baidoa, the CO fostered development of the political process while being very careful not to be seen to be favoring any particular group. The battalion group provided security for political meetings, and facilitated dialogue between the various groups. The sole UN representative in Baidoa was enthusiastic in his support for this program, but received very little encouragement from Mogadishu.

83. As mentioned previously, the sub-clan homogeneity of the Bay Region certainly assisted in the political process. There seemed among the local population almost universal acceptance of one political faction, which incidently had no significant military wing. Thus, by the time Operation Solace concluded and the battalion group were replaced by the French contingent, a reasonably viable, acceptable, and peaceful political structure existed in Baidoa. Unfortunately, as became evident soon after,

not the same could be said for the national level.

TRANSITION PLANNING

84. From the very day of my arrival in Mogadishu, HQ UNITAF were undertaking planning for the control of the operation to pass back to the UN. At the time I thought such haste to be premature and unseemly, but, having experienced the inertia of the UN bureaucracy, it is obvious that such early planning was merely prudent.

85. I was, however, unclear as to the status of the Australian commitment should control of the operation pass to UNOSOM. Was the seventeen week limit contingent upon the operation remaining under US control, or would we transition to a UN lead force, and if so, would our deployment be extended? Upon checking with LHQ I was advised that the basic determinant of our deployment would be the seventeen week duration, irrespective whether control had passed to the UN prior to its expiration. This firm redeployment date was a distinct boon, allowing us to take a relatively long term view to our planning. By contrast, it seemed that the US force was always planning to redeploy "soon", and that tended to shorten their focus somewhat.

86. While it is often difficult to predict an end date for an operation, nominating one does have its advantages. It adds a certain structure and encourages longer term planning. With a nominated end date there are only three possible outcomes:

a. the operation concludes and redeployment commences prior to the nominated date,

b. the operation concludes and redeployment commences on the nominated date, or

c. the operation continues beyond the nominated date and the contingent requires extension or replacement.

In only the last case does a significant planning or morale problem appear, which can be ameliorated by the nomination of another end date.

87. In the case of Operation Restore Hope, however, there were significant political imperatives which complicated the transition planning. The first of these was a desire to commence a US withdrawal prior to the Presidential Inauguration on 20 Jan 93. The US leadership role and troop contingent had been committed in December 1992 by President Bush, a "lame duck" President following his defeat by Clinton in November. There was an understandable desire on the part of the outgoing administration not to leave unfinished business, hence the pressure for the UN to take over leadership and US forces to withdraw. In fact the first US forces did depart on 20 Jan 93, having been replaced in Baidoa by the battalion group.

88. On the other hand, the UN was in no hurry to resume control in Somalia. With the failure of UNOSOM I still fresh, a full commitment to the fragile process in Cambodia, and increasing deterioration of the situation in former Yugoslavia, the UN's Department of Peace Keeping Operations was stretched to the

limit. As Operation Restore Hope was proceeding satisfactorily under US leadership, it was a problem that could be deferred rather than dealt with.

89. The UN's approach caused great frustration for LTGEN Johnston and the staff of HQ UNITAF, but had little impact on AFS operations. HQ AFS monitored the planning and reported progress, or the lack thereof, to LHQ. Early indications were that, if the UN resumed control, similar policies to those in force for Operation Restore Hope would be pursued. Apart from the prospect of having to move HQ AFS should we be under UN control for a significant period², it was judged that a transition would be smoothly achieved.

90. As the transition loomed closer it became increasingly apparent that UNOSOM II policies would be significantly different, due mainly to the wider mandate which incorporated aspects of disarmament and so-called nation building, and the more interventionist approach of the recently appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General, ADM Jonathan Howe. By this stage, however, it was also clear that the transition would not occur until early May, and, as AFS was to redeploy in mid to late May, the changed policies would have only marginal effect on the Australian contingent.

² The UN does not permit the presence of National Headquarters per se, and thus HQ AFS would have to deploy to Baidoa and assume a tactical role, while continuing to function as a de facto national headquarters

REDEPLOYMENT

91. Redeployment planning commenced in HQ AFS as early as March. Again a combination of sea and air was to be used, only this time the air was to be provided by 33 Sqn RAAF, flying B707 aircraft rather than chartered QANTAS B747.

92. It was decided that the French would take over responsibility for the Baidoa HRS, and a series of planning conferences were held both in Baidoa and Mogadishu to effect the relief in place. The size of the French force for Baidoa was to be slightly smaller than the battalion group, but they were confident they could accomplish the same tasks. By this stage the frequency of relief convoys had dropped off considerably.

93. The redeployment plan called for a phased withdrawal of the battalion group through a staging base in Mogadishu and on to the appropriate mode of transport. Three RAAF C130 aircraft were deployed from Australia to assist with the incountry movement of personnel from Baidoa to Mogadishu.

94. By far the most pressing problem was compliance with tough Australian quarantine regulations. Every piece of equipment to be returned was to be thoroughly stripped, steam cleaned, and inspected by Quarantine Inspectors deployed to Somalia for the purpose. It was a time consuming and frustrating period, with considerable duplication of effort, and little flexibility exhibited. A significant quantity of equipment was destroyed in the process. At the last moment, the entire equipment redeployment operation was almost derailed by the export of

Somali livestock which were required to transit our "clean" area in the port. The export was deemed to be "in the Somalia national interest", and thus had priority of use of the port. A compromise was eventually found, but it was a test of both patience and negotiation skills.

95. On 20 May 93, exactly 150 days after the arrival of the NLT, the last soldier from AFS departed Mogadishu. Two days later, on a parade in Townsville, the Australian Active Service Medal was presented to every member of the contingent following which the force marched through the streets of the city. Thus completed Operation Solace.

96. With the loss of just one soldier³, AFS had made a significant impact on the people of the Bay Region, providing security and restoring stability to what had been known only six months previously as "The City of Death".

CONCLUSION

97. By almost all measures, Operation Restore Hope/Solace was a success. At the time of the transfer to UN control in early May 1993 the death rate from famine was negligible, and a degree of stability was evident throughout the Restore Hope AO. Of course, there remained some fundamental political issues to be resolved, but I believe that the climate created by UNITAF was conducive to

³ On 2 Apr 93, LCPL Shannon McAliney was accidentally shot by a member of his section while on patrol in Baidoa. He died shortly after. A judicial review subsequently cleared the other soldier involved of any culpability.

progress in those areas with the application of confidence building, even handed policies. That the process subsequently broke down with disastrous results was tragic, but in no way should taint the achievements of UNITAF.

98. From an Australian perspective, Operation Solace demonstrated that a significant combat force could be quickly deployed over long distances, and operate effectively within a coalition setting. In previous UN type deployments, the Australian contribution had tended to be in the form of combat support or combat service support capabilities, such as communications, engineer assistance, and movement control. The provision of a combat capability for Operation Solace elevated the Australian contingent to a position of primary importance, and when the tasks were undertaken well, earned a very good reputation for both the Nation and the Service.

99. The battalion group's operations within the HRS were thoroughly planned and well executed. The high level of presence maintained over a large area with limited force was achieved by an energetic patrolling program which paid large dividends in terms of local acceptance and deterrence.

100. Of course, the importance of the various standardization agreements and fora was reinforced. That AFS was able to operate readily within the US operational and logistic settings was directly attributable to the ABCA Program, the extensive individual exchange and training opportunities, and the combined training programs of both countries.

101. The command and control arrangements also significantly contributed to the success of the operation. The leadership and purpose exhibited by LTGEN Johnston contributed to a atmosphere of confidence and co-operation among the coalition commanders. His co-ordination of politico-military aspects with the US Presidential Envoy, Mr Robert Oakley, where neither sought to dominate, and each contributed as their role and expertise demanded, was instrumental in the achievement of the mission. In addition, the effectiveness of HQ UNITAF, enhanced by being an extant fully functioning headquarters prior to the operation, was a force multiplier. The contrast with subsequent UN and US command and control arrangements during UNOSOM II is telling.

102. Finally, the fundamental reason for the success of Operation Solace was the commitment and professionalism of the officers and soldiers of all ranks. With very few exceptions, the men and women deployed to Somalia approached their task with enthusiasm and energy. The compassion and understanding displayed by the average soldier for the plight of the Somali people were somewhat surprising at first, but given the humanitarian nature of the mission, entirely appropriate. At the same time his aggression and determination in contacts with hostile forces when they occurred were not lacking. I remain very proud of having commanded the officers and soldiers who made up Australian Forces Somalia.